

A Typical Day in the Life Of an Editor

I know it seems like editors ignore the work they need to read, but just as an author has a lot more jobs than just writing the book, the editor has a lot more jobs than just reading it.

The higher an editor is on the food chain, the more responsibilities she has.

On any given day, editors have to attend meetings, answer email, make phone calls to authors and agents, deal with in-house deadlines for things from cover copy, catalogue copy, launch sheets, tip sheets, author and agent lunches. They have to put through money for checks, come up with titles, and approve art work. They have to go over contract issues, and often have lunches planned with agents.

Poor Kate has to answer the million and one questions I have daily – but because I write a lot of books, I often have more questions. And because **Kate** is an **Editorial Director**, she has more meetings than the others, she oversees editors, signs off on editors' contracts, titles and acquisitions.

READING:

- Monique Patterson said there is very little reading in the office.
- Cindy Hwang said only about 10% of her day is reading in the office.
- Most editors do their reading in transit, at home, and on the weekends.

MEETINGS:

There are usually 5 meetings a week, sometimes more.

- Meetings to discuss cover concepts twice a week (Art meetings)
- Launch meetings (for a new line, or a new author)
- Pub meetings
- Pre sale meetings
- Meetings to strategize and market books.
- Editorial meetings – for mass and trade – at least once a week (to discuss possible book projects)
- Schedule meetings (to work out the schedule)

BUYING PROCESS:

Before buying a book, a lot of people get involved, and read the book:

- Publisher
- Someone in Sales,
- Someone in Publicity,
- Other in house editors
- It's discussed it at an editorial meeting.
- Everyone who has read it weighs in, including sales and sometimes marketing and it is decided whether or not to make an offer on the book.

- The publisher, editor-in-chief, and president are the ones who make the final decision on how much to offer.
- Sales, marketing and publicity do weigh in, but no decision is made based solely on input from one department.

There is a discussion from all sides that takes place.

HOW MANY AUTHORS DOES EACH EDITOR HANDLE?

Cindy Hwang:

Excluding anthologies, currently about 35 authors. Including anthologies, over 40.

Monique Patterson:

Right now, my list consists of about 30 authors – maybe a few more.

Kate Duffy: over 50

CONTESTS:

We all know that editors judge contests.

But that's NOT for them, it's for you, and it's one more thing that detracts from their day.

Monique Patterson:

...hasn't found any authors from contests, but she judges because there's always the possibility she'll come across someone she loves and has to publish.

Cindy Hwang:

... considers contest a resounding success because she's found (are you ready?) FOUR authors after judging so many of them.

Kate Duffy:

OK, this is just me. I rarely request to see what I've judged and that means nothing. It doesn't mean that I do or do not want to see it. I'm asked to rank finalists and that's what I do. I never write anything on the manuscript. I don't edit what I don't own. In short, lazy me does only what I am asked to do.

Only once in the many contests I have judged was I even asked if I wanted to see the winner. "Oh," I thought, "now that you mention it, that might be a good thing." And I bought it. You will love MOSTLY MARRIED by Lisa Manuel, Zebra, April 04.

THE CONTEST FINALISTS:

Rita winners:

Monique Patterson:

She'll pay closer attention, but it still comes down to how strong the work is and how great the read is.

Cindy Hwang:

The author might stand out a little more from the crowd, but ultimately it won't matter if she doesn't love the voice or the material.

KEEPING ON SCHEDULE:

- Authors are notorious for turning books in late. (But NOT Dianne or me)

Editors try to put in some wiggle room when setting deadlines with the author. If it's only a week or two, the schedule can accommodate it.

But if a book is very late, it can force her to push it back, which will throw everything off. You have to come up with a new plan.

It affects everything from the cover and cover copy, to spine size and manuscript pagination.

If an editor knows far enough in advance that a book will be late, she can work with the author and the agent to assess the situation and adjust the schedule.

Monique: I LOVE it when a book comes in early. Even if I can't start it right then, I know it's on time and the schedule is okay.

Cindy: If a book is early, it's sometimes possible to get an earlier pub date than planned.

BEST AND WORST PART OF THE JOB:

Monique Patterson:

BEST: Working with the authors, the actual editing, helping an author shape the book into what they both want it to be. Working with an author to come up with a great title and cover idea.

WORST: Meetings & Paperwork. But even there, she'd rather have the control it gives than give it up.

Cindy Hwang:

BEST: Working with authors and finding new voices.

WORST: Never having enough time to catch up. Editors are always behind on their reading.

What editors really want?

MORE: More humor, more tears, more emotion, more sensuality, MORE OF EVERYTHING!

A CLEAR VOICE (voice makes the submission work)

A PROFESSIONAL SUBMISSION. Don't send it in until it's ready to be sent. No, the editor will not fix it for you.

READABLE quit worrying about your font and your margin spacing.

EASY TO OPEN. Kate jokes about getting the *jaws of life* to open some packages.

It's not Wedgewood China. It's paper. Just put a rubber band around it and put it in an envelope.

CARDS WILL GET LOST. Sometimes mail doesn't get opened right away. Kate says she gets 6 feet of mail a week.

Dianne had 6 editors on her first book. I've worked with over 6 editors.

Editors I've worked with:

- Susan Sheppard
- Birgit Davis-Todd
- Marsha Zinberg
- Kate Duffy
- Cindy Hwang
- Kim Cardascia
- Monique Patterson